

MSGR. LIGUTTI
HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

VIA PACIS
[THE WAY OF PEACE]
DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER
VOLUME 1 NO 8
JUNE / JULY, 1977

On Hospitality

With this issue of via pacis, we undergo some of our largest changes of our ten months as a community.

Our live-in community has now grown to eight. Ann Deitchman, a personal friend of Mike, joined us in mid-May, and has been extremely helpful in the daily responsibilities of hospitality. Fr. John Zeitler, of Holy Trinity parish here in Des Moines, will be joining us as we occupy Ligutti House. He will help tie members of his parish into different areas of Christian service, such as our work. Kathy and Kevin Miller also hope to join us in July. Kathy has already been of great help as a friend and as an extended member of the staff. Welcome, Ann, John, Kathy and Kevin.

We hope to take possession of Ligutti House by June 15, as it took the present occupants longer to find new shelter than we planned. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the house; we are now able to pay cash for the house and not borrow money as we expected to do. Much work needs to be done to rehabilitate the house. Please come and join us. We hope to offer hospitality in Ligutti House by early fall.

The garden is doing quite well, despite the drought central Iowa is experiencing this year. Eddie plans to submit his secret for Continued on p.8

Summer Discussions

Part of the Catholic Worker tradition is the "round table discussion" where people join together to verbalize and clarify thoughts. The liturgy is celebrated every Friday at the house (713 Indiana, one block north of University) at 8 p.m., followed by a discussion.

June 24: No liturgy or discussion will be held as we join in the celebration of the ordinations of Mike O'Meara and John Bertogli.

July 1: Joe Morissey, The American Friends Service Committee.

July 8: to be scheduled.

July 15: the staff. Personal Reflections on the Catholic Worker Movement.

July 22: Peter Dubec, The Catholic Press and Pluralism in the Church.

July 29: Bishop Maurice Dingman, Peace and Justice and Our Prisons.

via pacis is published by the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, P.O. Box 4551 (713 Indiana and 1301 8th Street) Des Moines, IA 50306. Telephone: (515) 243-0765. Subscriptions are free upon request. Staff: Frank Cordaro, Joe Da Via, Ann Deitchman, Kathy Miller, Kevin Miller, Ed Polich, Mike Smith and John Zeitler.

via pacis

Msgr. Ligutti

(Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti, the namesake of our second house of hospitality, is a local and international figure in rural Catholic faith. Our thanks to Fr. John Gorman for providing us with this brief biography.)

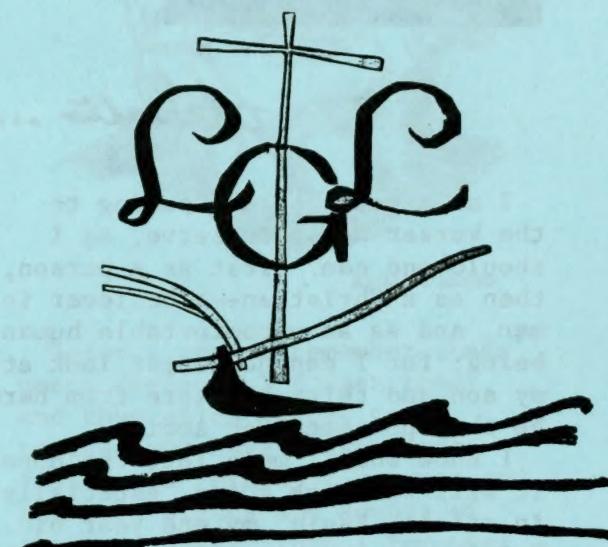
Luigi Ligutti was born in a rather poor section of northern Italy, in the province of Udine, on March 21, 1895. He came to the U.S. with his family at age 12, when they settled in the city of Des Moines. Even at this age, his first interest and one of his main interests was education.

Pursuing the priesthood, he attended St. Ambrose College in Davenport and was ordained on September 22, 1917. In the early days of his priesthood, he served on the first faculty of Des Moines Catholic College and high school, now Dowling High School.

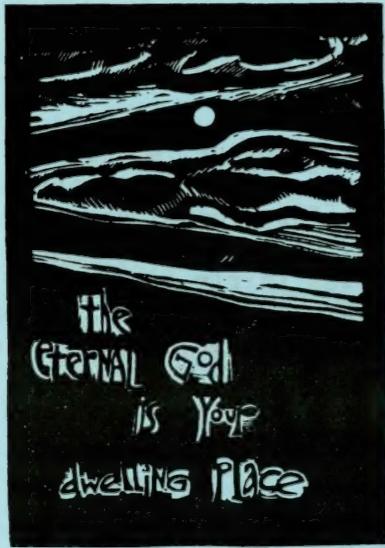
His interest in the poor was increased while he served as pastor in the rural community of Woodbine and later as pastor at Assumption church in Granger, 45 miles north of Des Moines.

At this time, he found the rather poor financial condition of the farmer was bad, but not nearly as bad as that of the laborers in the coal mining camps. There were nine such camps within ten miles of Granger. The miners had no ownership of anything, except their own soul. Wages went to the company store for food and clothing, union

dues, blasting powder, and rent. All these expenses were deducted from wages before the miners received anything. Although the daily wage was fairly good, the average work week was two or three days long. The education facilities were inadequate, and the miners were looked on as social outcasts and poor immigrants.



In addition to constructing Assumption church and school, the monsignor planned for a homestead in Granger to help the farmers and miners out of their poverty. The Homestead Act of the New Deal government allowed this plan to become a reality. In great part by his personal labor, fifty homes were constructed, and possession came with a low down payment and Continued on p.11



Sr. Meinrad

The
Grand
Is Your
dwelling place

thoughts ...

I am a young person coming to the Worker house to serve, as I should and can. First as a person, then as a Christian--a believer in man, and as an uncomfortable human being; for I can no longer look at my son and think him safe from harm, be that political or social.

I know when I move into the house it will be tough going, especially in raising Kevin, my one year old. But I so much agree with the sparks of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin literature I've been exposed to that I would rather see my son grow up poor and human than rich and inhuman in his relationship to others. At the Worker he will be able to see, taste and smell the life of the poor. He will witness the blood, sweat and tears of the poor. We will love the rich also, as hopefully he will see them serving the poor.

For myself, the reasons I want to become a part of the Worker are several. There is a satisfaction of being involved...being part of the solution instead of feeding the problem. Living at the Worker, I think, is a witness to others that I believe in a peaceful change in this world. There is so much to do and at this point I feel like I'm starting in the middle of something and feel pressed upon, mainly by myself, to catch up and hurry along.

Also, I get a gut feeling of joy giving to others. Before, when I gave, it always seemed such a small gift...a stocking cap to a hitch-hiker in the winter, a jacket to another because my car had a heater, food to another single parent; but I want to do more than just give when the occasion arises.

At the Worker it will be a donation of my time, patience, love, lots of love, and whatever else. But not for an hour, it will be a full commitment of days and weeks...it will be always...all ways for me. That is the way it has to be.

Something I hope to relearn is to be a more prayerful person, and to really listen to my Father. Perhaps there will blossom a stronger faith, in everything that is good and peaceful. Along the way there should be a real compassion for my sisters and brothers, an insight into their suffering and a clearer notion of how to help them.

I hope that you will pray and believe with me.

Love,
Kathy

via pacis

A CHALLENGE

I sit in the shade of a railed-in porch, surrounded by the sights and sounds of the inner city: yapping dogs, people talking, cars grumbling, children yelling, sirens wailing, pigeons cooing. I know, as I sit here in the shade of a railed-in porch, that I have a choice to make. I can choose to touch and be touched by the sights and sounds of the inner-city, or I can stay in my shade behind the railings, not touching and untouched.

I have found during my three weeks here at the Worker that it is not easy to let myself touch and be touched by this environment. I came from a life at a large college campus. I lived alone, except for a cat, and I could choose to see the people I wanted to see when I wanted to see them. I lived for myself, and at times even begrudged my cat the care he required.

Today I am challenged at the Worker to see and hear the many kinds of people who come here. It is easier, in some ways, for me to stay in my railings. It is hard to really see and hear people who are so different from me in background and experience. They have needs for food and shelter I have not yet had. But they also need to be looked at and listened to, and these needs I do know.

June/July, 1977



Kathleen Rumpf

Today I try to remember these needs (because I forgot them), and thus allow myself to be touched and have these needs filled. In return, I can see and hear the sights and sounds of the inner city. Then I remember that I am not alone and then I remember how very much I am like these people who come to the Worker. It is humbling for me, and in some sense frightening, for it is hard for me to accept our likeness. But with time, living at the Worker, I hope to better accept the challenge of love and choose to be touched so that I can touch others like me.

--Ann

The Catholic Worker:

The Detroit "Call to Action" Conference last fall should be a turning point for the American Catholic Church and its relationship to the state, a change that has been long in coming. Its strong statement on disarmament and the use and preparation of nuclear weapons reflects a long maturing process for the church.

One could say a seasonal change has come. As the statement reads, the church is taking an official stance directly opposed to the present day American foreign policy of "might makes right." Not only does the Call to Action document officially condemn the arms race and its misuse of much needed human resources, but, in its section on conscientious objectors, it affirms and condones the right of any individual citizen who wishes to personally reject and disassociate himself or herself with the state's apparatuses of death. The ways of cutting the ties to the evil system include refusal to serve in the military and refusal to pay taxes for warmaking.

It seems that the church's perception of itself over the last 50 years in the U.S. has taken a full swing. Up to the 1920's, the American Catholic church saw itself as a mission church in a Protestant country. Because of the recent influx of poor Catholic immigrants,



the church saw its "call to action" as being one of "Americanizing" its constituency of millions of old world members. Its idea of social justice was to make sure that Roman Catholics had a fair shot at "a piece of the American Pie." America--the New World-- was the nation among all other nations where the best of what God and man is was being manifested (actually considered as the will of God). The benefits of such a noble experiment were the fruits of unlimited material and technological resources: enough for all! An American Catholic, until recent times, could almost equate God and country as one and the same.

With Detroit and other such church statements ("This Land is Home to Me," a pastoral letter on powerlessness in Appalachia by the Catholic bishops of the area) what

hopefully is beginning to surface is a radical departure from the prevailing American social, political and economic structures. This leads to a call for a particularly Catholic Christian action to meet the injustices that are with us today. A mature call to action recognizes the American way of life as inadequate to meet the needs of the poor in our midst. In fact, the call sees the American lifestyle as the major cause of the poor and their particular contemporary expression of poverty.

Catholics may be coming to an impasse in their thinking of what social justice is. One way to explain this change would be to see the difference between a liberal and a radical. A liberal is one who feels that there are some people who need a little

The Winter Solstice of the Catholic Church

help. A radical is one who knows we are all in trouble and need to do something of systemic change to make a difference. When it comes to nuclear weapons, we are all in trouble. It is going to take a radical systemic change in how we perceive ourselves to make a difference in the realities of the apocalyptic nuclear standoffs that we live in each day.

One of Peter Maurin's Easy Essay Essays, titled "The Dynamite of the Church" calls the church to task:

Writing about the Catholic Church a radical writer says:
"Rome will have to do more than to play a waiting game; she will have to use some of the dynamite inherent in her message."
To blow the dynamite of a message is the only way to make the message dynamic... It is about time to blow the lid off so the Catholic Church may again become the dominant social dynamic force.

Seasons of change are coming to the Catholic Church here in America, and one of its starting points began in the mid-Thirties with the Catholic Worker movement. Like all seasonal changes, the everyday weather is slow to respond to the change. At the time of the winter solstice, the days begin to get
Continued on p.8

Continued from p.8

longer with more and more exposure of the sun. This happens in the dead of winter, around December 22, but the longer days and stronger sun is a sure sign that spring is soon to come.

The Catholic Worker, which started in the mid-Thirties and based much of its vision on the writings of Peter Maurin, seems to have been the winter solstice for the American Catholic Church: a time for seasonal change and a step



COMING
FOLLOW
ME
Ade Bethune

towards maturity. The Catholic Church no longer has to worry about being aliens in a strange land. We are Americans and by rights need to express who we are and what we believe, not only in our institutional church sacraments but in our every day lives and secular structures that determine the quality of life that we live.

In an article in Cross Currents titled "Public Theology and the

Catholic Worker," Wayne Lobue paraphrases Maurin in saying

What Catholics still needed to understand, and that included those already transformed in the nation's melting pot, was that their identity as Americans would always remain incomplete as long as they did not recognize their status as a nation within a nation and the need to leave their imprint upon the larger nation.

America's strength has always been in its pluralistic society. It is about time we as Catholics throw our particular hat in the ring; in fact, it is sorely needed. Catholic Action in the years to come may mean direct opposition to our American state and its economic system. Still, our action will be American, and in a long line of other American actions that were in opposition to the majority at a particular time but later became the backbone of American society: the American Revolution, abolition, women's suffrage, organized labor and civil rights.

--Frank Cordaro

Continued from p.2
growing corn to Successful Farming so others can share in his bounty.

And our latest uninvited guests have included a bat, which shared Frank's bed until Joe found better accommodations for it outside, and the rat that shares the basement with Ann, Eddie and Mike. In the selfless Catholic Worker style, they eagerly give up their rooms at the sound of his crunching.

via pacis



A Mixed Blessing

"God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer... Is it one prayer? No, it is two--one is uttered, the other not... If you would beseech a blessing on yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse on your neighbor at the same time."

Mark Twain,
The War Prayer

This quote calls us all to task on respect for others as we ask and work for our blessings. Except in time of drought, if we ask for rain on our crop which needs water, are we not asking for a curse on our neighbor's crop which can be harmed by it?

In terms of the lifestyle we enjoy here in America, we refuse to see the second part of the prayer--the curse on our neighbor.

Our food economy is an example. Many foods we have become dependant upon are cash crops from underdeveloped countries. Coffee is the most blatant example. The coffee bean has no nutritional value; it only serves to meet America's need for a stimulant.

The land in South America used for growing coffee beans could better be used for producing more nutritional food for the native people. However, the South American farmers and farm workers are tied into our corporate economics. Our corporations own the land, so we will dictate the crop: coffee. Even if the land is not owned by U.S. corporations, wealthy land-owners also obviously consider profit more highly than human needs.

Our shame for the unfortunate South Americans may be spoken, yet we still sip. Our prayer for the daily cup is also a curse for continued poverty.

The continued poverty of migrant farm laborers even in our own country is the result of the same mixed blessing. We continually deny or subvert unionization, which most Americans have as a right. And when we are asked to boycott, the answer is all to often no. "If they unionize, food prices will continue to go up." If the people who harvest our crops

Continued on p.10

Continued from p.9
can't even eat well themselves,
maybe we do need to pay more for
food.

Our raping of minerals from other countries carries still another curse and blessing: our demand for metal for designed-in obsolescent cars, for processing of ore from other countries keeps these nations dependent on us. We thereby determine their level of poverty: the jeep that cost two tons of ore yesterday could cost eight tons today.

In terms of our strong military, the curse is on us: by stockpiling weapons, the opponent does the same. In effect, we arm ourselves for suicide, if you see all people as one. Little did the delegate to the Detroit "Call to Action" conference realize the irony of her statement: "We can't disarm. We need the weapons to protect my children." What about the other mother's children killed by our weapons?

Once we realize the curse attached to our prayer, we must take action. We must be what we want the other person to be, as Peter Maurin said, or walk three miles in his moccasins, by the Indian proverb. Boycott grapes and lettuce, unless you personally are willing to work under the same conditions without a union. Disarm, unless you acknowledge the right of every other person alive to kill you or your loved ones.

Often the attitude of those who can personally live the way they hoped the other person would is to criticize. The people who haven't seen the curse are evil, or those

who haven't worked out the inconsistencies are the enemy. And this obviously is a curse too: because I found the truth, you all are damned.



But, if we see the family of life as one, your hate is my hate. Even if I boycott, if someone else doesn't, I am not complete. Although one may be non-violent, the reality of non-violence makes personal non-violence incomplete.

via pacis

Your sin is also my sin. Jesus died as a sacrifice, admitting that although he lived righteously, he had to offer himself for those who didn't. And despite this sacrifice, we continue to wrong each other.

Lately, the B-1 bomber has been in the daily news. President Carter promised a decision on the \$ 25 billion program before July. It is expected that he will accept a limited production of the 244 proposed planes. Again, our blessing for a faster and more deadly plane seals our fate for a swifter and more complete death.

As this newsletter is being mailed out, I hope to be part of a group picketing at the White House, asking that we not accept the curse of another deadly weapons system. I cannot accept being passive in my feelings. Arrests

Continued from p.3
a long time to repay. Finally, the poor people had a chance at ownership, the ability to raise crops and livestock, and control over their own lives.

Beyond the Granger homestead, Msgr. Ligutti had an early interest in cooperatives and credit unions. He believed in empowering people to help themselves, and his introduction of better seeds, especially hy-bred corn and rice to underdeveloped countries, had a share in feeding the world's hungry.

As a church ministry, he worked to promote the goals of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization as Vatican Observer. Msgr. Ligutti served as President

are expected for those who trespass on White House property. But is a short time in jail too much to pay when our very lives are endangered by the B-1?

And perhaps the B-1 will be funded. We will still continue asking for disamament. The action cannot stop until weapons are no longer needed.

There is no other option but destruction by our own curse.

--Joe Da Via



and also as Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference and as founder and now as Chairman of its international offspring, Agrimissio.

Titles do not make a man, however, with the integrity and strength of the monsignor. Early in his life he developed opposition to those in power because of money or government position, who put monetary interest of the few ahead of the physical and spiritual welfare of the masses.

Those who followed his life closely saw his philosophy develop: if something is right and just, somehow it can be accomplished. The difficult never bothers him; overcoming the impossible takes a little longer.

Catholic Worker Community
P.O. Box 4551
Des Moines, Iowa 50306

Catholic Worker House:
713 Indiana

Msgr. Ligutti House of Hospitality:
1301 8th Street

Necessity for Smallness

We emphasize always the necessity of smallness. The ideal, of course, would be that each Christian, conscious of his duty in the lay apostolate, should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ's words:

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.

The poor are more conscious of this obligation than those who are comfortably off. I know of any number of cases where families already overburdened and crowded, have taken orphaned children, homeless aged, poor who were not members of their families but who were akin to them because they were fellow sufferers in this distorted world.

--Dorothy Day

